



US ARMY NAF EMPLOYEE BENEFITS PROGRAM



NAF BENEFITS ON-LINE – Update # 3

APR 2004

IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR HRO PERSONNEL

On April 5th, 2004, we will launch the latest upgrade to our Benefits Online System. This is the fourth NAF BENEFITS ONLINE Implementation Instruction we have published. The original instructions and previous updates are available in the HRO restricted section of our web site. The purpose of this memorandum is to review our progress in implementing the system, update you on the latest system features and improvements, and share some observations with you concerning usage.

SYSTEM REVIEW

We activated the NAF BENEFITS ON-LINE System for Open Season and Hire Transactions on November 2nd, 2001, and implementation instructions were distributed on that date. We then added the Update Beneficiary and Update Dependent transactions, and on December 12th, 2001 we activated the Update Retirement Participation transaction option, which was announced in our NAF BENEFITS ON-LINE Update # 1. Thereafter, we gradually added additional events so that all benefit transactions could be accomplished on BENEFITS ON-LINE, and instructions for their use were published in the BENEFITS ON-LINE Update # 2 of September 2002. Throughout 2003, we focused on making minor adjustments to the system. This Update # 3 includes additional instructions for system use.

SYSTEM CONCEPT (Repeated from previous Implementing Instructions)

You will find that the system is very easy to use and requires no special training. This is an on-line system that is accessed through the internet, which allows you to process Benefit transactions and enter data directly into the Benefits data system. The system is designed as a series of screens, which are self-explanatory. There are numerous edits built into the system, based on benefit plan rules, which will prevent most coding and election errors. When you are signed into the system, you are working in our Benefits System in real time. As you enter data and transactions, you are updating the system data. There is no delay in system updates and no overnight system processing. The system is transaction or event driven. Those events have been logically labeled, so you do not need a key to determine what transaction to use. Access to the system has been restricted so that you may only process transactions for employees that are serviced by your personnel office. Because you still have a requirement to file signed copies of Benefit Forms in the OPF and send a copy of those forms to NAF Financial Services, when you have completed a transaction, the last screen will provide you the capability to print the necessary forms with all appropriate blocks completed. Please remember that at this point, the Payroll System cannot take an electronic feed from our Benefits System. Therefore, **you must send a copy of the Benefit Election Forms to Payroll to initiate payroll deductions or contributions.** Each payroll cycle, the payroll data is loaded into our Benefit System. This process generates error reports that will identify employees who have enrolled in a Benefit Plan but are not making contributions. The date of enrollment determines the start date for contributions. **If contributions are not initiated upon enrollment, the employee will be liable for the missed contributions, and Payroll will establish collection procedures to recoup the indebtedness.**

WHO TO CALL FOR HELP (Repeated from previous Implementing Instructions)

You may need to contact our systems administrators here in the NAF Employee Benefits Office if you experience any difficulty. Here are the people who can help you:

Systems Administrator
Sr. Systems Administrator
Operations Manager
Chief, NAF Employee Benefits

Eric Penningroth (703) 681-7273
Joanne Baker (703) 681-7340
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IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR HRO PERSONNEL

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Recently, we've added two events that will give you more flexibility in using the system. Those events are Edit New Hire Med/Life and Election Summary. We've also made some minor system enhancements to ensure the system is responsive to your needs. Those are discussed below.

EDIT NEW HIRE MED/LIFE ELECTIONS

This event is used to add or change benefit elections for new hires. When a new employee is processed, they may not be prepared to make benefit elections during initial processing. This event will allow you to enter new hire benefit elections for health and life insurance at any time during the first 31 days of hire. This event was added to give you more flexibility in processing new hires. As you know, once a new employee is hired in the BENEFITS ON-LINE System you cannot reenter the New Hire event to make any changes, since the person has already been hired in the system. The event allows only health and life insurance election changes. Retirement participation is mandatory and automatic. Participation in the 401(k) Plan is not restricted to new hires, so 401(k) Plan elections can be done in the 401(k) Plan event at anytime. Use of this event, as with all events, is screen driven and needs no special instructions.

ELECTION SUMMARY

This event is used to review an employee's benefit elections and to reenter the system to generate the forms that implemented those elections. This event was added at the request of several users who desired the capability to "see" what benefit elections are in the system for an employee and to generate a new form in the event the form did not print during the initial transaction. No actual benefit transactions may be processed under this event. It acts like a "read only" event.

TRANSACTION EFFECTIVE DATES

Several events have been modified to permit entry of an effective date of the election, as follows.

Hire Event – Enter effective date of hire in the past, up to the processing date.

Med/Life Events – Enter effective date of coverage in the past, up to the processing date.

Retirement Plan Event – Effective date is automatic with date of hire or processing date if enrolling after initial hire. Retroactive effective dates are not permitted.

401(k) Plan Event – Effective date is automatically set on the processing date.

Termination Event – Enter effective date of termination in the past, up to the processing date. Future effective date of termination, up to 45 days, may be entered only for employees who are retiring on an immediate annuity or on disability.

Update Events – Automatically enters the processing date as the effective date.

Transfer In and Out Events – Enter effective date in the past, up to the processing date.

SYSTEM UPGRADE

Effective April 10th, 2004, we will install a system upgrade which will change the look of the system and allow you to perform account maintenance functions that previously could only be done by our system administrators.

NEW BENEFITS ON-LINE LOGIN PAGE & USER PASSWORDS

Starting Monday, April 12th, 2004, when you access BENEFITS ON-LINE, you will see a new look to the login page. Simultaneously, we are implementing new system security standards that require a ten-character password. You must change your password to comply with this requirement when you login, since all passwords will be set to expire on Friday evening, April 9th. The system will guide you through the process of changing your password. Your new password must have ten characters, a combination of alpha or numeric characters with no symbols. You will receive confirmation that your password has been changed. Please make sure you provide the password to all authorized users in your HRO. Since all passwords are encrypted in the system, we cannot access your password to tell you what it is. We can, however, reset your password if you have forgotten it.

NAF BENEFITS ON-LINE – Update # 3

IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR HRO PERSONNEL

NEW BENEFITS ON-LINE HOME PAGE

Once you have successfully logged in, you will be presented with the new home page, which will ask you what you would like to do today. You will have four selections as follows.

Help with Benefits On-Line – If you click on this selection, it will take you to the NAF Benefits web site where you can view all the instructions for system use, including this Update.

Select Employee Event – If you click on this selection it will take you to the event screen, where you can select an event, access the employee record, and enter the desired benefit transaction.

Account Maintenance – If you click on this selection, it will take you to the account maintenance screen, where you will be able to maintain your BENEFITS ON-LINE User Account. Instructions for maintaining your account are shown below.

Change Password – If you click on this selection, it will take you to the screen that allows you to change your password, using the new ten-character password.

ACCOUNT MAINTENANCE

This new system feature will allow you to maintain the information in the system pertaining to your user account, which could previously be entered or changed only by our systems administrators, such as how your signature block will appear. Please complete all the information entries, so we have all your contact and account information in the system. You will be able to update this information at anytime. Your user name, however, cannot be modified, because that controls your access level and restricts your access to only those records of employees whom you service.

OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING BENEFITS ON-LINE USE

Use of the BENEFITS ON-LINE System has now become routine, and over 2,500 transactions are processed each month on the system. We appreciate the enthusiastic support of the system and the help have provided us in identifying and correcting system glitches and making improvements to the system. Recently, we have detected some processing problems that are affecting our ability to provide the most accurate and timely processing of data on benefit elections. We need your help in correcting the following problems.

DELAY IN ENTERING NEW HIRES

It is important that you “hire” new employees in the BENEFITS ON-LINE System within the first few days of their actual hire date; even if they are not prepared to make benefit elections. Remember, you can now enter those new hire elections later, within the first 31 days of hire, by using the new Edit New Hire Med/Life Event. If you do not “hire” the new employee in the BENEFITS ON-LINE System within the first few days of their hire date, the payroll import will create a shell record in our system. Once that happens, you cannot do a New Hire Event, and the only way to put in the initial transactions and demographic information is through our system administrators.

TERMINATION OF EMPLOYEES

When an employee separates, you must terminate them in the BENEFITS ON-LINE System. Recently, we have discovered a number of separated/terminated employees who are still showing as active in the Benefits System. Separating employees do not automatically terminate in our system when you separate them in the payroll system. Therefore, their benefits will continue, even though their contributions have stopped, until we detect the error. This also leads to improper crediting of service for retirement, creating a liability to the Health Benefit Plan due to continued enrollment without contributions, and other adverse impacts on the Benefit Programs. Please ensure that separating employees are terminated in the BENEFITS ON-LINE System. Also, please don't forget to forward the appropriate paperwork on terminating employees, as specified on the onscreen instructions for terminations.

NAF BENEFITS ON-LINE – Update # 3

IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR HRO PERSONNEL

ERRONEOUS SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

We continue to find employees in the Benefits System with two different social security numbers. This appears to occur when the employee is reported to payroll under one social security number and “hired” in the Benefits System under another social security number. Since both the payroll and benefits systems are driven by SSN, this results in two records being created for the same employee. One record has enrollment data; the other contribution data. Because of electronic data exports, the employee who is paying for benefits may in fact be denied those benefits because the contributions aren’t tied to the benefit election. **Please ensure that SSN’s are entered correctly.** Should you detect an error or inadvertently enter an incorrect SSN, please contact the system administrators, so they can delete the erroneous record.

INCOMPLETE BENEFITS ON-LINE TRANSACTIONS

Occasionally, a user will terminate their session without completing the transaction, and then attempt to complete the transaction by generating the pdf. version of the benefits form, which is then sent to payroll to initiate the payroll deduction. This results in the employee making the required contribution without being enrolled in the benefit program. This is particularly troublesome for employees who think they have enrolled in the Health Benefit Plan; note on their LES that they are paying the premiums, but find out when they seek medical care that they are not actually enrolled. **Please do not attempt to complete a BENEFITS ON-LINE transaction by using the manual pdf. version of the form.** Incomplete benefit transactions should be reported to the systems administrators so they can correct the entries and allow you to restart your session.

CONVERSION FROM FLEX TO REGULAR EMPLOYMENT CATEGORY

When a FLEX employee converts to a Regular Part Time or Full Time position, please treat this as a Hire Event in the BENEFITS ON-LINE System. Recently, we have detected several conversions in which the FLEX Appointment date was used as the Hire date. **For the purpose of benefit entitlement, the Hire date is the date of conversion; not the FLEX Appointment date.** Using the FLEX Appointment date will result in erroneous creditable service.

FUTURE INITIATIVES FOR BENEFITS ON-LINE

We continue to work on the final phase of the BENEFITS ON-LINE System, the employee self-service feature, that will allow employees to review their benefit records, obtain a statement of benefits, get retirement projections, and submit service requests to correct information in their Benefit Records. We anticipate employee access will be fielded in the next few months. We will keep you posted on our progress.

Regrettably, our efforts to expand the system to give you a local inquiry and report capability, so you can run management information reports on the status of benefits and other information on the employees you service, has been delayed until the more advanced version of Benefits Workstation is available. We will continue to work toward getting you this capability. As an interim solution, upon request, we can provide you the Benefits Census Report for your installation, which will provide you with complete participation and service data on your employees. The report is in Excel format, so it can be sorted to present the data in your preferred format. Please email one of the system administrators if you would like to have the latest version of your Benefits Census Report.

Our goal continues to be making this system totally responsive to HRO personnel and management, provide timely and accurate benefit program elections for our employees, and achieve the highest degree of accuracy in all aspects of our Benefit Programs. We appreciate the enthusiasm with which you’ve approached this new system and the valuable feedback you continue to provide us so that we can ensure maximum operability of the system.

Please let us know how you like the new look of Benefits Online and the new features we’ve added.

We need your feedback. Just email me at Ronald.Courtney@CFSC.Army.mil or Contact one of the System Administrators listed on the first page of this Update.